

RIVERWAYS

News Notes #4
May, 2003

Celebrating Rivers and Spring
from the Massachusetts Riverways Program (www.massriverways.org)

Dear River Advocates,

Across Massachusetts we work with dynamic people who love rivers. Their stories of rivers inspire and teach us. As spring is upon us and the river herring and alewives are running upstream, we bring you an excerpted narrative by Tim Watts who describes his experiences on the **Nemasket River**, a spectacular herring run— with 5000 acres of spawning grounds—in the Taunton River watershed. Tim's piece is followed by a brief article describing Riverways' **Fishway Stewardship Program**.

June is Rivers Month! Following a year of working to protect and restore rivers, Watershed Associations, land trusts, Stream Teams, towns, advocacy groups, sanctuaries, businesses and citizens across Massachusetts have created opportunities for Massachusetts residents to enjoy the rivers during our beautiful spring. Celebrate—bring your friends, families, legislators, town officials and take to the rivers. Each spring, the Riverways Programs staff compile the May and June river activities from watersheds across the Commonwealth and put them together in the **Rivers Month Calendar for Massachusetts**. These events are organized by week on our web page at <http://www.state.ma.us/dfwele/river/rivcalendar03.htm>. In the meantime, we have provided a 'teaser' of upcoming events over the next week or so in this edition of *News Notes*.

Citizens in many watersheds have asked us who to call with questions on various river/related issues and topics. In response, the Riverways Programs staff put together a list of commonly requested topics and the corresponding Riverways staffperson(s) with experience in dealing with those topics. We encourage you to contact us with your river-related questions or concerns. We can also network and provide other references for you if we can't help you directly. Wrapping up this issue of *News Notes* is a short Resources and Grants section with grant and award **deadlines** in the near future.

Before closing, I wanted to express my and my Riverways colleagues' profound gratitude for our having recently been honored with **2003 Environmental Merit Awards** from the **Region One/New England** office of the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**. The awards were presented in an Earth Day ceremony at Faneuil Hall (see <http://www.epa.gov/ne/pr/2003/apr/030417.html> for more details). Also receiving EPA awards that day were Mass. Chief of Commonwealth Development **Doug Foy** (for his work at the Conservation Law Foundation), **Marcia Benes** of the **Mass. Association of Health Boards**, and **Lance Van Lanten** of the **First Herring Brook Watershed Initiative**. We offer our heartiest congratulations to Doug, Marcia, Lance as well as all the other EPA award recipients.

See you on the rivers – Joan Kimball

pre-colonial times the Nemasket River flowed out of the lake at a point some distance east of its present location. An earthen dam now crosses the ancient bed and parallels the shore of the lake." Apparently at some point in colonial times they moved the outlet of Nemasket to its present location. This is visible when approaching Assawompsett by canoe. About a hundred yards from the outlet the river widens and its course runs almost perfectly straight toward the pond. Apparently some enterprising souls attempted to channel the Nemasket for a shipping canal. They either ran low on shovels or strong backs; fortunately for us and the Nemasket the scheme was a failure.

From its outlet the Nemasket meanders lazily through marsh and swamp lands until it goes under Rt. 495 and then Rt. 28. Passing beneath Rt. 28 heading downstream, the new Middleboro Little League field would be on your left. During construction of the field they unearthed an Ancient Wampanoag village. Unfortunately they dug up and hauled most of the site away before it could be well documented. The remaining artifacts suggested that the site was several thousand years old, and was probably a heavily used area in ancient times.

Below this point the river continues down to the dam, and the alewife fishing site below it at Wareham St. The Nemasket scrambles down one of its few riffle reaches here, leading to a short stretch that brings you to the Ancient Wading Place at the Rt. 105 bridge below the center of town. Traveling further down through more meadow and swamp lands, you come to the place called Muttock, otherwise known as Oliver's Mills, at Rt. 44. This was the site of another extensive Wampanoag village and fishing site which was used from ancient times to the colonial period. Where the bones of the old mill complex now litter the river there was once a stone fish weir used to catch alewives and shad. The Wampanoag's village and ancient burial place sat above on the hills over looking the stream to the south and east.

Once past here the Nemasket continues its meandering course down under Rt. 44 past the Middleboro Sewer Plant and on into the peaceful undeveloped marshes of North Middleboro. It is about half a day paddle from here to the Nemasket's confluence with the Taunton (a.k.a. the "Great River") below Titicut St. in Bridgewater.

One other suitable name for the Nemasket might be the river of smiles. As a resident of Middleboro I have the privilege of being a voluntary observer for the Middleboro Lakeville Herring Fishery Commission. Each Sunday morning during the fish season I go down to the run to check permits and keep an eye on the goings on.

People come from all over to see the spectacle of the Nemasket Run. Adults and children scoop the fish up, dumping them into buckets to take home. Children scamper around, trying to pick up the fish that flop out of the buckets. Across the stream a mother mink darts down to the water to snare an alewife from the shallows; people pause their fishing for a moment to watch her haul it back to her den. Down below the fishway, soaking wet kids thrash about in the shallows like a gaggle of bear cubs on a salmon stream. Oblivious to the cold they scoop the fish onto the muddy bank with their hands and wrestle with each other for the silver trophies fresh from the sea.

One particular afternoon I happened to stop by the run in the early afternoon. Teachers from the local school were just arriving with a group of "special needs" kids. It was a perfect afternoon for catching, warm and sunny, the river loaded with fish. Teachers and chaperones wheeled the kids in their wheelchairs down to the river bank with nets in hand. It was a sight that could bring tears to the eyes of anyone with even half a heart.

I never saw a group of kids have so much fun. The teachers and chaperones had all they could do to keep them from plunging into the water. One would brace the chair, while another would hold the kids by the shoulders as they lunged out with their nets. Then another would have to help them haul up their heavy loads of fish and release them, only to repeat the seen all over again. When it was time to leave, all were tired, thoroughly soaked, covered with fish scales, smelly and grinning from ear to ear.

On another morning I was doing my watch at the run when a very old woman arrived with what appeared to be her granddaughter. It was a cold raw spring morning, dark, drizzly and gray. Surprisingly the stream was quite full of fish despite the foul weather conditions. Standing by the run I watched as the old woman shuffled down the steep incline toward me. In one hand she clutched a cane, her other arm was intertwined with her granddaughter. The old woman leaned heavily against the younger for support. She was wrapped in a heavy black over coat that seemed to swallow

While watching her shuffle back up the incline I couldn't help but wonder how many times similar scenes had been played out here. It's an interesting thought to contemplate, considering Nemasket's long history. 8,000 years ago when the first clay pots were fired and the first bit of cloth was woven in Europe and the Middle East, people came here to Nemasket. 4,500 years ago when the first written language was established in Samaria, people came here to Nemasket. 2,000 years ago during Biblical times, people came here to Nemasket. How many old Wampanoag women have shuffled down to this very spot to relive scenes of their youth? How many fathers, mothers and children have come to this very spot over the past ten thousand years to celebrate the return of the Alewives? How many, I do not know. However I do know that I along with many others find a strange comfort here in the riffles of Nemasket, the place of fish, the river of smiles.



Each year you can practically set your watch by the return of herring to the coastal rivers of Massachusetts. The bright silver flash of alewives and blueback herring is a sure sign of spring. During their spawning runs, which begin in mid-March to mid-April and end in mid-May to mid-June, river herring face an arduous journey up and over, and in some cases, around, dams and through fishways to reach their natal waters.

On the North Shore, there are now active fish counts on the Parker, Ipswich, and Little Rivers, and a “fish watch” starting on the Saugus River. These counts are conducted visually. On the South Shore, and in the Buzzards Bay and Taunton River watersheds, there are municipal and volunteer fish counts on Town Brook, Mattapoisett and Nemasket Rivers. These counts are conducted by automated electronic counters installed in the exit channel of the fishway, combined with periodic visual counts by volunteers. The Charles River Watershed Association is also helping to coordinate an anadromous fish count this year on that river as well.

-Riverways Small Grants Program:	Eileen Goldberg (617) 626-1546 or Pat Sheppard (617) 626-1541
-other river-related grant opportunities:	Eileen Goldberg (617) 626-1546 or Pat Sheppard (617) 626-1541
-state procurement and contracting process (including Comm-Pass):	Pat Sheppard (617) 626-1541 or Eileen Goldberg (617) 626-1546
Technical questions – regulations:	
-Rivers Protection Act and regulations, including the Riverfront Area Resource Area under the Wetlands regulations:	Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
-MEPA regulations and project review, including Environmental Notification Forms (ENFs):	Cindy Delpapa (617) 626-1545
-Water Management Act:	Margaret Kearns (617) 626-1533
-Interbasin Transfer Act:	Margaret Kearns (617) 626-1533
-NPDES permits and regulations – wastewater and stormwater (including NPDES stormwater Phase II):	Cindy Delpapa (617) 626-1545
-drafting and passing local river protection bylaws:	Joan Kimball (617) 626-1544
Source Water Assessment (SWAP) reports and implementation	Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
Technical questions – river/stream protection and/or restoration:	
-Riparian land protection:	Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
-Streambank erosion and stabilization:	Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
-Functions and values of vegetated riparian areas, including recommendations for vegetated riparian buffer establishment and/or retention:	Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
-Dams and other barriers to fish and/or wildlife movement along rivers/streams and the River Restore Program:	Karen Pelto (617) 626-1542 or Michael Merrill (617) 626-1526
-River Continuity	Michael Merrill (617) 626-1526
-Fishway design, construction and/or stewardship:	Karen Pelto (617) 626-1542
-Instream Flow protection and/or restoration	Margaret Kearns (617) 626-1533 or Russ Cohen (617) 626-1543
-Fish and aquatic habitat surveys	Margaret Kearns (617) 626-1533
-Lake/Pond issues, including lake/pond watershed surveys:	Christopher Carney (617) 626-1547

Riverways Staff List:

Director, Joan Kimball	617-626-1544
Assistant Director, Patricia Sheppard	617-626-1541
River Restore Program- Coordinator, Karen Pelto	617-626-1542
Technical Coordinator, Michael Merrill	617-626-1526

Adopt-A-Stream Program- Coordinator, Rachel Calabro	617-626-1549
Stream Team Organizer, Amy Singler	617-626-1548
Western Stream Team Organizer, Carrie Banks	413-773-5031
Urban Rivers Program- Coordinator, Cindy Delpapa	617-626-1545
Watershed Ecologist/RIFLS Coordinator- Margaret Kearns	617-626-1533
Small Grants Program- Eileen Goldberg	617-626-1546
Lake Watershed Stewardship Program- Chris Carney	617-626-1547
Rivers Advocate- Russ Cohen	617-626-1543

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Rivers Month Calendar for Massachusetts 2003

(excerpt – go to www.massriverways.org for the complete list)

Events taking place from May 17-23rd

May 17th through 23rd – *National Safe Boating Week*. This event is part of the nationwide 2003 North American Safe Boating Campaign. "Boat Smart. Boat Safe. Wear It!" (i.e., wear a personal floatation device) is the 2003 campaign theme that organizations across the country will be promoting. For a list of events visit <http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/events/events.htm>.

May 17th (Saturday) – IPSWICH RIVER- *Ipswich River Canoe paddle hosted by the Middleton Stream Team*. 8:30 – 11:30 A scenic two hour canoe paddle on the Ipswich River will be hosted by the Middleton Stream Team on Saturday, May 17. Bring binoculars, camera, life jackets, and a snack to enjoy along the way. Gather at the Middleton Canoe Launch (Route 114 and the Ipswich River) at 8:30 AM . We'll leave at 9:00 AM and arrive at Thunder Bridge (East Street , Middleton) between 11 and 12 noon , depending on how much wildlife we see and how many pictures we take. If you're not bringing your own canoe, contact the Stream Team at 978-777-4584 or StreamTeam@attbi.com so we make sure we have enough.

May 17th (Saturday) – CENTERVILLE RIVER – *Long Beach and Centerville River Walk*, 10:00 AM – 12 Noon, sponsored by the Barnstable Land Trust. Join Town of Barnstable Conservation Commissioner Rob Gatewood for a 2-hour, 3 1/2 mile walk along Long Beach to the tip of the barrier spit and back by way of the Centerville River Trail. Along the way Rob will discuss coastal dynamics, beach nourishment projects, dredging, piping plovers and much more. This walk is lots of fun! Meet at the Craigville Beach parking lot beach house. Hard-soled shoes will make for easier walking on dry sand. Bring a trash bag if you'd like to help leave things a little more beautiful. Contact Jaci Barton at the Barnstable Land Trust at 508-771-2585 or www.bltr.org for more info.

May 17th (Saturday) – CHARLES RIVER – *Canoe and Breakfast on the Charles* , 7:00 – 11:00 AM. Sponsored by Mass. Audubon's Broadmoor Sanctuary. Experience early morning mist rising on the Charles River as we paddle a gentle six miles of the river, past Rocky Narrows Reservation and Broadmoor Sanctuary, to end at the South Natick Dam. With our canoes and guides you'll explore the

natural and cultural history of the area, and a hearty catered breakfast will be served midway on the banks of the river. \$36 for members; \$42 for non-members. Call the Sanctuary at 508-655-2296 to register.

May 17th (Saturday) – NORTH AND SOUTH RIVERS – NSRWA/Mass. Audubon Spring Bird Walk, 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM, co-sponsored by the North and South Rivers Watershed Association and Mass. Audubon. Please meet us at Mass. Audubon's North River Sanctuary for an early morning bird walk guided by Ellyn Einhorn of MassAudubon. Birds that we may see on this walk along the North River include egrets and herons, thrush, scarlet tanagers, and migrating wood warblers. We may even get to learn some bird songs while we are there! Contact (781)-659-8168 or paula@nsrwa.org for more information.

May 17th (Saturday) – ASSABET RIVER – Assabet River Canoe Trip, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Sponsored by Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Organization for the Assabet River. Join trip leader Brandon Kibbe for a paddle on what is considered by many to be the most scenic reach of the Assabet River: the 5.3 mile stretch of slow water between the Gleasondale (Hudson) and Ben Smith (Maynard) Dams. With spring in full swing, this trip will surely provide ample opportunities for bird watching along the sprouting and blooming river. Dress for the weather. Registration required. Members \$5, Non-members \$10 (per person). A limited number of canoe rentals are available for an additional \$15. Contact SVT at 978-897-5500 to pre-register.

May 17th (Sunday) – SHAWSHEEN RIVER – Cleanup in Bedford, 9:00 – 11:45 AM, sponsored by the Shawsheen River Watershed Association. Meet at Friendly's Ice Cream on Routes 4/225. We may or may not have a dumpster, so please bring garbage bags and a readiness to wade in the river. Contact Bob Rauseo at 978-851-9505 or e-mail BobOtter@aol.com for starting point, directions or last minute information.

May 17th (Saturday) – DEERFIELD RIVER – Whitewater Boating with the AMC, Join the AMC on Fife Brook for a whitewater trip. Pre-register by the previous Wednesday by calling trip leader Heather Roe at 413-587-0961. Newcomers welcome, you do not have to be an AMC member. Ask trip leaders for details on equipment and times. Also see www.amcberkshire.org.

May 17th (Saturday) – NORTH RIVER – North River Awareness Festival, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM, sponsored by Salem Sound Coastwatch. Informational displays, activities and presentations at North River Canal Park (a.k.a. Leslie's Retreat Park), Commercial St., Salem. For more information, please contact SSCW at 978-741-7900 or info@salemsound.org.

May 17th (Saturday) – NORTH RIVER – Innovative Stormwater Management Retrofit Project, 1:00 pm. Sponsored by Salem Sound Coastwatch and The Bioengineering Group. Meet at the display at the North River Awareness Festival, NR Canal Park. In 2001, the Center for Urban Watershed Renewal (CUWR), a non-profit environmental organization with a goal of restoring degraded urban areas, was awarded a \$319 grant by the MA DEP, funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency, to retrofit The Bioengineering Group, Inc. building with innovative stormwater management techniques, including rainwater planters and a green roof. Join TBG staff for a look at the building and

presentation on the design and methods involved in this innovative project. For more information, please contact SSCW at 978-741-7900 or info@salemsound.org.

May 17th and 18th (Saturday and Sunday) – **CONNECTICUT RIVER** – *Carve a Canoe Paddle and Introduction to Traditional Tandem Flatwater Canoeing with Caleb Davis*, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM (Sat. 5/17) and 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM (Sun. 5/18), at Barton Cove. Fee: \$100; pre-registration required. Carve your own cherry wood paddle with simple tools in one day with master paddler and craftsman Caleb Davis; then learn traditional tandem canoeing. More about Davis at <http://tremolo.wcha.org>. Phone the Northfield Mountain Environmental Education Center at (800) 859-2960 to sign up.

May 18th (Sunday)- **MILLERS RIVER** – *Whitewater Boating with the AMC*. Join the AMC on the lower Millers for a whitewater trip. Pre-register by the previous Wednesday for trips. Call trip leader Jack Gill for details at 413-238-5816. Newcomers welcome; you do not have to be an AMC member. Ask Jack for details on equipment and times. Also see www.amcberkshire.org.

May 18th (Sunday) – **FORE RIVER** – *Wessagussett Cleanup*, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM, co-sponsored by the Weymouth Historical Commission and the Fore River Watershed Association. For more information call Jodi Purdy-Quinlan, Executive Director of FRWA, at 781-331-2700.

May 18th (Sunday) – **HOUSATONIC RIVER** – *Flatwater Canoeing with the AMC*, 9:00 AM. From Covered Bridge Lane in Sheffield to Rannapo Road in the Ashley Falls section of Sheffield. Meet at the covered bridge. Contact trip leader Tom Galvagni at 413-447-7698 or Thomas.galvagni@verizon.net. Newcomers welcome; you do not have to be an AMC member. Ask trip leaders for details on equipment and times. Also see www.amcberkshire.org.

May 18th (Sunday) – **WESTFIELD RIVER** – *FiberMark Fishway Open House*. Afternoon event. Visit the fishway/eelway in West Springfield to see the Salmon and Shad runs at their peak. Sponsored by the Westfield River Watershed Association. Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 413-568-3005 for more information and exact times.

May 18th (Sunday) – **SHAWSHEEN RIVER** – *Canoe Trip in Andover*, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM, sponsored by the Shawsheen River Watershed Association. This will be a family-oriented trip, starting at Lowell Junction Road in Andover and ending at the Ballardvale Mill Pond in Andover. Contact Bob Rauseo at 978-851-9505 or BobOtter@aol.com for last-minute information.

May 22nd (Thursday) – **BUZZARDS BAY WATERSHED** – *Making Connections, From Watershed to Water Tap*, 6:30 – 9:00 pm. This is a free training on watershed protection for the residents of Wareham. Co-sponsored by the Clean Water Fund, Coalition for Buzzards Bay, Sippican Land Trust, Rochester Land Trust, Mattapoissett Land Trust and the Acushnet/Fairhaven Land Preservation Trust. The session aims to empower citizens, educate them on threats to water quality and gain the skills to do something about it. Training to be held at Dudley Brown Post VFW, off Onset Avenue in Onset (4 Gibbs Ballpark Road). For more information call Mike Davis, Clean Water Fund, at 617-338-8131.

May 23rd (Friday) - **CONNECTICUT RIVER** - *Barton Cove Campground and Canoe Rentals Opens*,

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